

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—Monday, October 4, 1999

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. TANCREDO).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 4, 1999.

I hereby appoint the Honorable THOMAS G. TANCREDO to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate agrees to the amendment of the House to the bill (S. 323) "An Act to redesignate the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument as a national park and establish the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area, and for other purposes."

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BENTSEN) for 5 minutes.

SPORTS MILESTONES FOR HOUSTON

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of two important sports milestones that were achieved yesterday in my congressional district in the City of Houston.

The first milestone was the Houston Astros' clinching the National League Central Division title for the third year in a row. While their 97-win season was impressive, equally impressive was the division race, which lasted until the final day of the regular season. Yesterday, Astros 22-game winner Mike Hampton took the mound on only 3

days' rest and delivered a decisive performance, guiding the Astros to the Central Division title.

Despite a year plagued by injuries, forcing the team to use the disabled list 16 times, the Astros managed to finish the season with the second highest win total in franchise history.

Starting with the loss of outfielder Moises Alou in the off season, this season was undoubtedly a test for Astros players and fans alike. The only Astros position players who did not spend time on the disabled list were first baseman Jeff Bagwell and second baseman Craig Biggio, both of whom who have had career years leading the National League in RBIs and doubles respectively.

The team also weathered the temporary loss of manager Larry Dierker, whose rapid recovery from brain surgery revealed the strength and breadth of his character. But in the end, what drove the Astros to victory was the team performance on the field: great pitching, fielding, defense and timely hitting.

Of particular note was the Astros' amazing pitching staff: Mike Hampton, who set a team record with 22 wins, the best in the National League; Jose Lima, whose animation and love for the game delighted fans and whose commitment to succeed resulted in 21 wins; Shane Reynolds, with 16 impressive, hard-fought wins; and Billy Wagner, the best closer in baseball, with 39 saves; and a bullpen that set a remarkable record for winning every game in which they held a lead after eight innings.

With the steady veteran presence of fan favorites Craig Biggio, Jeff Bagwell, Ken Caminiti, and Carl Everett, the Astros were able to overcome the adversity of injuries and find a way to win 97 games.

A second important Houston sports milestone was also achieved yesterday in the Astrodome, with the end of the 1999 regular season. It is special because, after 35 years, yesterday's division-clinching game was the last Astros regular season game in the place known in Houston as the Dome.

Next year, the Astros will begin play at Enron field, a new ballpark in the heart of downtown Houston. But the Astros' history, for better or worse, has been established in the Astrodome, the Eighth Wonder of the World. The brainchild of Judge Roy Hofheinz, the Astrodome has been the site of 35 years of great sports memories.

The Dome saw Elvin Hays meet Lew Alcindor for a classic college basket-

ball game in 1968. Mohammed Ali fought there, Elvis and Selena performed there, Evel Knievel jumped, Billy Graham preached, and Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs played a score-settling tennis match.

The Oilers won big games and lost a few there, the University of Houston Cougars called the Dome their home, and the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo have maintained one of Houston's most important traditions with countless concerts and rodeos that have thrilled millions.

But the Astrodome will always be identified first with the Houston Astros. The Astrodome's opening in 1965 was so special that the New York Yankees traveled to Houston for an exhibition game, which saw the very first Dome home run hit by none other than Mickey Mantle, witnessed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, who attended the game with tens of thousands of his fellow Texans, including myself.

The scoreboard, unlike any other in sports, shared color, lights, and Texas pride for all who entered. The team, with their often colorful uniforms, played their hearts out, rain or shine, in the 72-degree comfort of the Dome.

The list of players who wore the Houston Astros uniform is legendary, from Jimmy Wynn to Joe Morgan, Larry Dierker to Rusty Staub, Nolan Ryan to Mike Scott, Art Howe to Dickie Thon, Phil Garner to Ken Caminiti, Don Wilson to Billy Wagner, Glenn Davis to Jeff Bagwell, Bill Doron to Craig Biggio, Craig Reynolds to Doug Rader, Cesar Cedeno to Jose Cruz, Joe Niekro to Alan Ashby, and J.R. Richard to Dave Smith.

There have been many unforgettable moments and unforgettable athletes who have played the game of baseball for the Astros. Now, as the final chapter of the 1999 Astros season is being written in the playoffs, this generation of Houston Astros players will have a chance to bring home the team's first World Series title to the city of Houston.

The next generation of Astros stars will play their games in the new ballpark, in itself a modern marvel. But there is only one Astrodome, and Houston fans and the athletes who performed so greatly there will never forget it or the franchise that proudly played there for the great fans of the city of Houston.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.